



Virginia Commission on Youth

STUDY OF ALTERNATIVE EDUCATION OPTIONS ADVISORY GROUP MEETING

July 24, 2007

10:00 a.m.

5th Floor East Conference Room
General Assembly Building

Members Present

The Honorable Robert Brink, House of Delegates
Cynthia Cave, Dept. of Education
Arlene Cundiff, Dept. of Education
Laurel Marks, Dept. of Criminal Justice Services
Brenda Philbin, Chesterfield County Public Schools
Willie Carrington, Newport News Public Schools
Susan Dandridge, Chesterfield County Public Schools
Sarah Geddes, Just Children

Commission on Youth Staff Members

Amy Atkinson, Leah Hamaker, Cordell Hairston, Ashley Gayle

Presenters

Jo Ann Burkholder, Irene Walker-Bolton, Virginia Dept. of Education; Joyce P. Jones, Hopewell City Schools; Jan McKee, Virginia Alternative Education Association

Agenda Items

I. Welcome and Introductions

Amy Atkinson began by welcoming Delegate Brink, with special thanks, and provided information on the upcoming conference on *Systems of Care and Evidence-Based Practices: Tools that work for youth and families*.

The Advisory Group is meeting to hear the presentations of four experts concerning methods to aid in prevention and education regarding disciplined youth. The group will also hear discussions of alternative methods of discipline that could be proposed to Virginia public schools in order to help the Advisory Group understand existing school prevention programs in Virginia.

II. Virginia's Student Assistance Programs

Student Assistance Programs (SAPs) were explained by Jo Ann Burkholder, Specialist, Safe and Drug-Free Schools, Office of Student Services, Virginia Dept. of Education. SAPs began in the mid 1970's, but started in Virginia in 1988. SAPs utilize a comprehensive systems approach of evidence-based curricula, practices, principles, and strategies to respond to K-12 student challenges. They are designed to reduce risk factors, promote

protective factors, increase asset development and foster resilience. Ms. Burkholder explained that SAPs create a flexible process intervention plan that is consistently monitored. In Virginia, 36 school divisions reported having SAPs.

Services that are received by students include:

- Individual counseling
- Drug and alcohol education and prevention
- Crisis intervention
- Case management
- Support groups
- Drop out prevention programs
- Mentoring programs
- Extracurricular clubs
- Teen parenting and pregnancy programs
- Conflict resolution
- Bullying prevention
- Tobacco cessation

There are three different models of SAPs. There is the internal model, which consists of staff hired by the district to perform SAP services. This is usually a SAP coordinator, who works with a team. The next is the external model, consisting of SAP services provided by outside agency with people professionally trained in substance abuse/mental health prevention and intervention. The final is the core team model, which consists of staff-implemented, school based environmental strategies, coordinate services, and regular meetings to discuss student progress and access need for intervention. In Virginia, 40% used the Core-Team Model; 42% used a Coordinator/Counselor model; 9% used both; and 9% used another model.

The basic goals of SAPs are to:

- provide collaboration between in-school and community resources
- encourage parent involvement
- increase the opportunity to help friends and participate in positive activities
- promote a safer school environment
- seek to improve grades, attendance and social challenges
- examine the best method of transitioning kids back into a traditional school setting following alternative education
- surround kids with support services

III. Effective School-wide Discipline

Effective School-wide Discipline (ESD) was explained by Irene Walker-Bolton, Education Specialist, Office of Special Education Instructional Services, Virginia Dept. of Education. ESD is a collaborative, proactive process to developing effective strategies for addressing inappropriate behavior that impeded successful teaching/learning. This alternative education method replaces punishing a child for bad behavior with teaching a child how to behave appropriately. Ms. Walker-Bolton explained that, when a school deficit exists, ESD encourages teaching the appropriate skill. Because ESD is a process and not a program, it is often easier to implement in the school system. A core team is established, representative of the entire school staff. This team receives training on each component of ESD. There is then a change in focus from reactive (focusing on what the student did wrong) to proactive (teaching and recognizing what students do right). The team uses discipline data to identify patterns and possible causes of inappropriate student behavior.

This information serves as the basis for developing effective intervention to decrease inappropriate behavior and increase desired behavior.

What does ESD look like at school?

- Discipline data is used to help track progress and identify areas to target for intervention.
- A consistent discipline referral process and procedures exist throughout the school.
- Schools make use of school-wide expectations and rules in specific setting to teach students appropriate behavior.
- Schools use a reward system to encourage appropriate behavior and effective consequences to discourage inappropriate behavior.

IV. Hopewell's Effective School Discipline Project

The Alternative Education Coordinator from Hopewell's Effective School Discipline (ESD) Project, Joyce Jones, demonstrated how ESD has worked in Hopewell's schools and in their Alternative Education Programs. Hopewell's school division has found that there are high levels of antisocial behavior associated with use of punitive strategies, lack of clarity regarding rules, expectations, and consequences, lack of consistency, and failure to address individual student differences. The "Big Idea" is to establish host environments that support use of evidence-based practices. It begins with: training; initial cohort school site visits/partnerships; assigned training and technical assistance centers program specialists, ESD teams are formed at each local school site and team meetings occur during the school year and summer. There are many different forms of implementation, including; presentations to the entire school staff and to students and parents; postings of expectations throughout the school and other sites; revised forms; handbook and procedures; and reviews of existing discipline data, procedures, forms, teacher/administrators surveys.

Hopewell's expectations are:

PRIDE

- Positive Behavior
- Respect
- Integrity
- Determination
- Excellence

HERO

- Honest
- Exceptional
- Responsible
- Organized

It is important to coordinate ESD at all levels, including elementary, middle, and high well has found that ESD works for everybody. They have one training for all groups. Since the inception of ESD, Hopewell has had only one expulsion.

V. Virginia Alternative Education Association

From the Virginia Alternative Education Association, President Jan McKee explained the importance of alternative education and the positive effect Bryant Adult Alternative High School has had on its students. In Bryant Adult Alternative High School, a non-traditional approach is provided for students who did not fit within the traditional school setting. alternative education also focuses on "bridging the gap" between alternative programs for students and a traditional setting, so that the transition back to school can be as smooth as possible for children since, more often than not, students fall back into bad behavior habits when reentering to their home schools.

VI. Discussion and Comments

The Advisory Group will meet next after the Commission's September conference. Ms. Hamaker will provide information to the Advisory Group electronically.

The meeting adjourned at 12:30 p.m.